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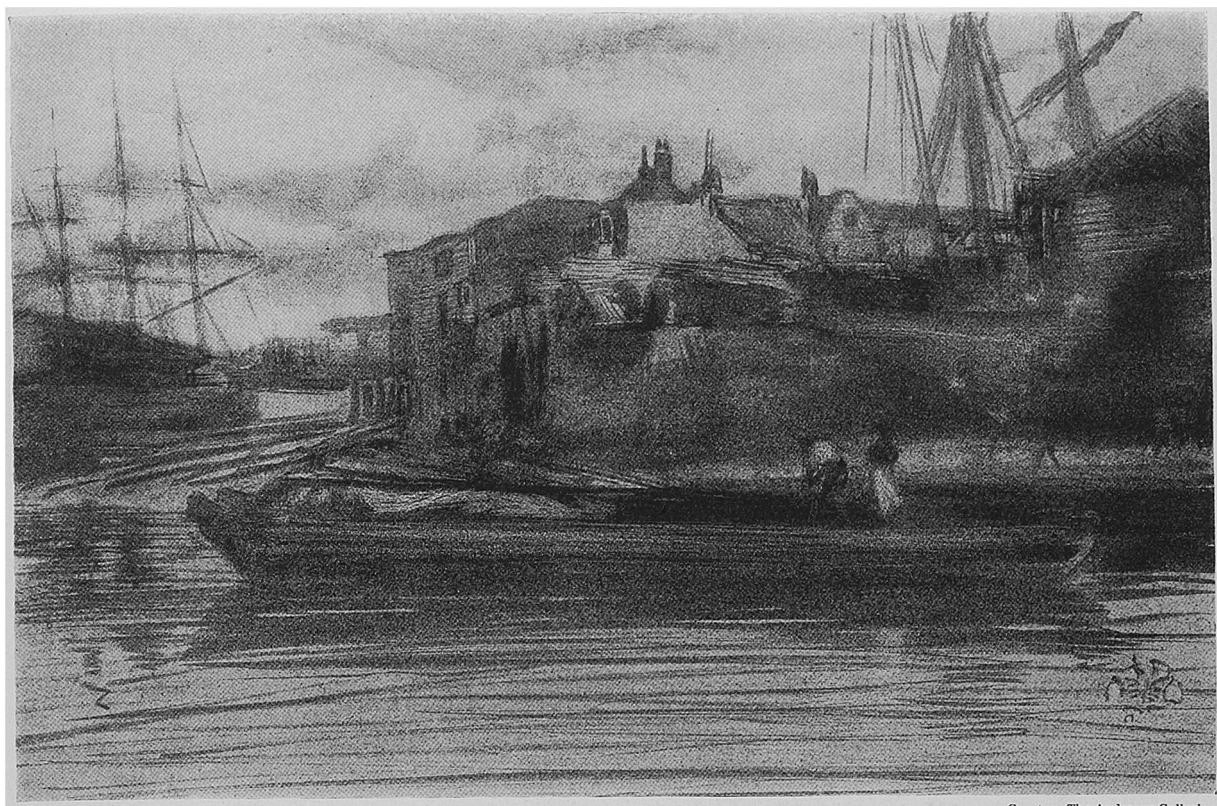
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Courtesy The Anderson Galleries

CONFIDENCES IN THE GARDEN. FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER



Courtesy The Anderson Galleries

LIMEHOUSE. FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

Lithography: An Art for Artists and Collectors

By JOSEPH PENNELL

THROUGH all the ages it has been the desire and the aim of the artist to do his work himself, and to have it seen and known as widely as possible. Until the invention of printing, he depended upon the Church and the State to place his paintings, his sculptures, his decorations in temples and cathedrals, in town-halls and by the roadside. But the printing press enabled him to multiply, cheaply and quickly, on paper designs which previously he had carried out, slowly and expensively, in stone or paint or bronze or illuminated manuscripts, and the prints pulled on the press were as much his own work as his paintings and sculptures and illuminations.

Dürer was the first great artist in

Europe to appreciate the advantage of the new invention and to bring his art to the people in the market place at Nuremberg, instead of sending them to see it in the churches and town halls. He himself has recorded, in his journal of his journey to the Netherlands, how he took with him and sold sets of his prints to patrons he found on the way, for the people who could not buy his pictures could afford to pay for his prints. Publishers saw their chance and books began to be illustrated and decorated with woodcuts and metal engravings. But woodcutting gradually degenerated and metal engraving increased in cost. After Dürer and Holbein the great artist was the exception who made great designs for the woodcutter, and



Courtesy The Anderson Galleries

SUNDAY—LYME REGIS. FROM A LITHOGRAPH BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

the painter also was the exception who reproduced his own work in metal, and the character of his painting was lost in the copyist-engraver's mannerisms.

Then Rembrandt came, and he understood, and he proved that by etching the artist could express himself and multiply his designs without the help of an interpreter, and that his prints were as autographic as Dürer's woodcuts. For their distribution he relied upon dealers who, even during Rembrandt's lifetime, gave a collector's value to his etchings, as we know from the *Hundred Guilder* print, though, save in his case, dealers do not seem to have created an artificial price for etchings in the modern fashion. His, however, as Michel says, were prized no less for their rarity than for their art, and with them the collecting of prints may be said to have begun.

Through the next two hundred years etching and metal engraving were almost universally used for both prints published separately and the illustration of books. The influence of the East led to prints in color and chiaroscuro, but these processes never became popular because they were too elaborate and required special craftsmen, specially trained. An objection to metal engravings was that they could not be printed on the same press with type. Papillon in France and Bewick in England then conceived the idea of working with the metal engraver's tools on wood. But, as a rule, the design was engraved by the highly skilled craftsman-copyist and not by the creative-artist who had made it on the wood block. These were the conditions until about 1800 when Senefelder, after years of experiment, invented the art of lithography.

Senefelder's aims were commercial, but he knew the artistic possibilities of his invention and pointed out that in the future its greatest value would be to the artist. When he had perfected lithography, which he did in about ten years, artists realized that he was right and that lithography was the one autographic graphic art. As a lithograph could not



Courtesy The Anderson Galleries
AN ORIGINAL INK DRAWING BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

be printed on a type press, wood-engraving remained supreme for book illustration during the next century, or seventy-five years, and engraving and etching continued to flourish in the hands of the most skilful engravers, though in reproductive work this still meant that the artist's design had to pass through the engraver's hands. But at once, and for fifty years, all over Europe, the great artists made lithographs, for not only was lithography more autographic than any method of engraving, but it required no apprenticeship. The more individual the artist's work, the better the result, provided he could draw, and the artists of the first half of the last century could draw, they had to draw, for there was no photography, or cubism, the crutches of the incompetant, to help them out of difficulties. Their masterpieces of lithography became the property of the people



Courtesy The Anderson Galleries
THE LONG GALLERY—LOUVRE. FROM AN ORIGINAL
PHOTOGRAPH BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

for lithographs were published and sold at a price the people could afford.

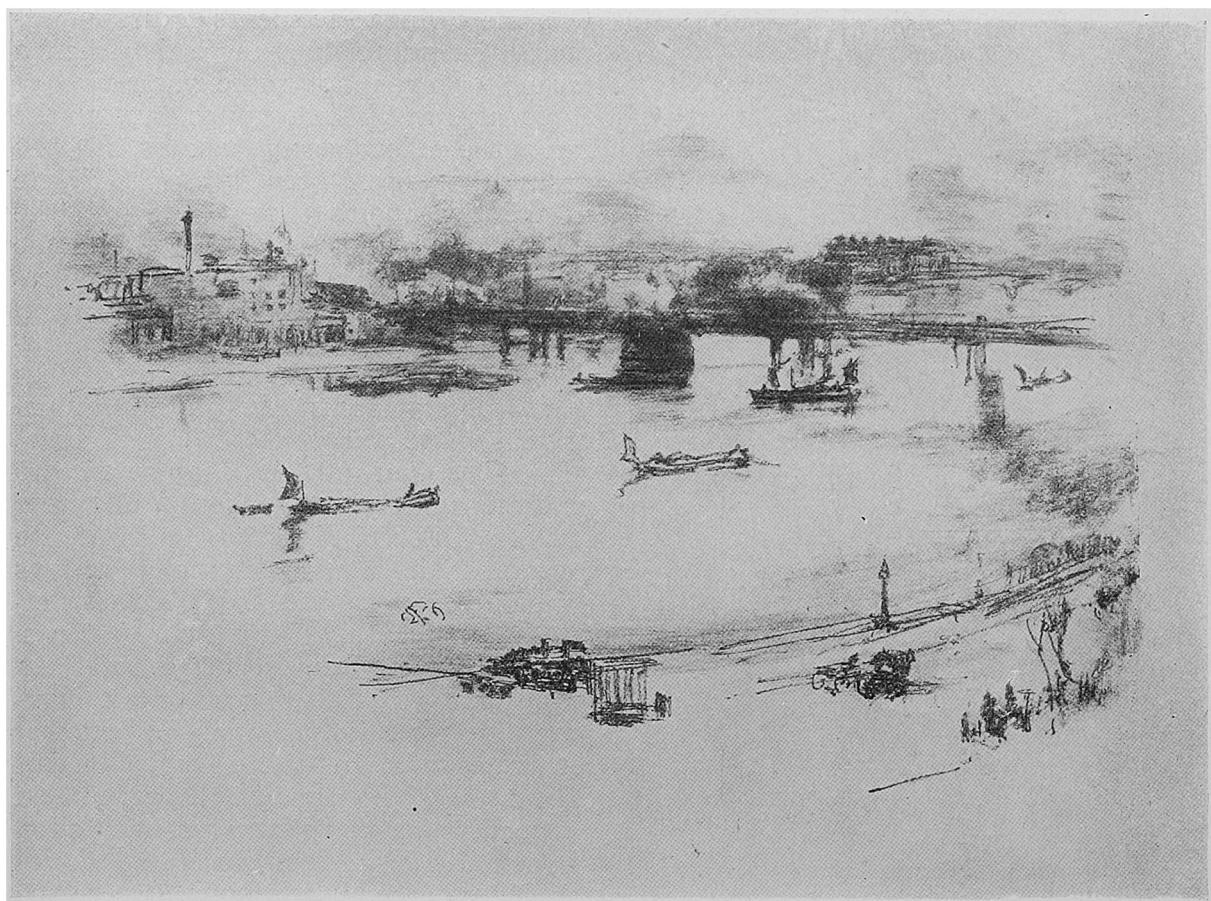
The professional lithographic artist appeared from the beginning. With his wonderful copies, especially of pictures in the great galleries, he superseded the equally wonderful metal engraver, just as they both have been superseded by the photographer and the photo-engraver to-day. And he became printer and publisher. Presently, in his shop, he enveloped the art, the simplest form of multiplication, in mystery, he claimed it as his sole property, he insisted that to make lithographs an apprenticeship to him must be served, and, as a consequence, for fifty years creative artists were kept outside the lithographic shop and not allowed to learn its "secrets," though the secrets the shopkeeper-lithographer traded on, and many he never had the intelligence to master, were all revealed in Senefelder's *Grammar of Lithography* published in 1818. Artistic lithography was suppressed.

Three great artists came to its rescue.

The first was a German who had had his training as lithographer—Adolf Menzel. He worked for the wood-engraver in his monumental *History of Frederick the Great* and other books, but he worked for himself in his *Uniforms of Frederick the Great* and later *Sketches on Stone*, and these drew the attention of artists back to the beautiful art in which the creative artist does all his work, and lithography was again taken up by artists in Germany. The years passed, and in France, where the greatest original work in lithography had been done by the greatest artists, Fantin-Latour proved once more that the artist lithographer need not be the product of a shop to produce masterpieces. He proved also that Senefelder was right when he said that stones were only an unfortunate necessity to print from. Fantin drew on paper and had his drawings transferred to stone, a method which Senefelder said was the method of the artist. Whistler followed Fantin and revived interest in lithography among the artists of England and America.

Whistler, of course, knew all about his friend Fantin's work, and about Menzel's too. But to Thomas Way belongs the credit of giving Whistler the opportunity to practise lithography. Way was enthusiastic and he furnished not only Whistler, but a number of British artists with stones on which they found no more difficulty in drawing than on ordinary paper. But having found this out to their satisfaction, they ceased to make lithographs, all except Whistler. He went on experimenting, first on stone, drawing with chalk, with wash, with stump, with ink, working from light to dark or from dark to light, doing anything he wanted. He quickly discovered the impossibility of carrying stones about with him when he drew out of doors and therefore, like Fantin and following the directions of Senefelder, he used lithographic paper. His lithographs are masterpieces, but they were made in technical ignorance of lithographic transferring and printing.

The younger men, working in England



CHARING CROSS RAILWAY BRIDGE. FROM AN ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPH BY JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER

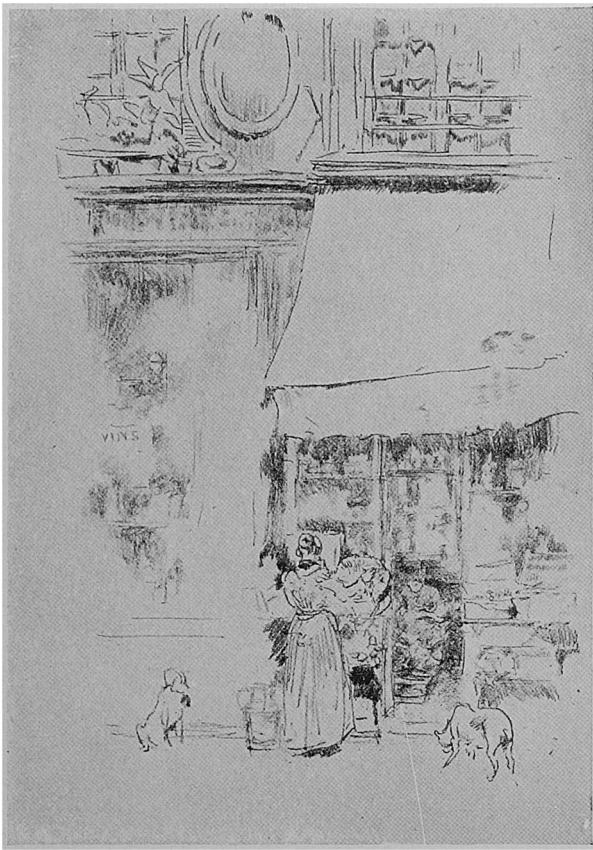
Courtesy The Anderson Galleries

and influenced by Whistler, took up lithography with such ardor that they ignored the professional lithographer and studied Senefelder's book, bought their own presses or broke open the doors of the shops, did all the technical work, the transferring and printing, themselves, or supervised it, soon seeing that lithography, like every other art, has no secrets except one—and that is the doing it. And they kept on studying and working until they had mastered every technical method and succeeded in rousing the interest of the public—or the small public that cares for art—in lithography. The reason for this new interest is simple.

When Whistler made his lithographs, it was solely for his own pleasure in the work. Lithography, thanks to the professional lithographer, had fallen so low, become such a by-word, that nobody wanted his lithographs because they were

lithographs, though he thought that the same persons who collected his etchings would collect his lithographs. However, a few years before his death it had become the fashion to collect Whistlers and the collector began to buy his lithographs because they were Whistlers. Then the collector, probably to no one's surprise more than his own, understood from artists that the prints had another value, that they were great works of art, of the same character as Whistler's etchings and pastels, and he went on buying them, now not because they were Whistlers, but because they were lithographs. And so, owing to Whistler's devotion to the art at a time when it was held in contempt, appreciation of it was revived and the collector was induced to think it worthy of his consideration.

Whistler's followers then removed another objection to lithography, that



Courtesy The Anderson Galleries
LA FRUITIERE DE LA RUE GRENELLE. FROM AN ORIGINAL LITHOGRAPH BY JAMES McNEILL WHISTLER

is from the collector's point of view. The artist rejoices in a method by which his work can be multiplied absolutely and autographically. But the collector is all for the rare prize, the small edition. He would rather have one print of the edition of fifty by the duffer than one of an edition of thousands by the master. Raffet and Charlet, Daumier and Gavarni were for him too common, their work having been designed for the multitude, not for the collector. Its cheapness was against it, though, as it becomes harder to find, the demand for it grows. The artist lithographer today, without sacrifice of his art, has done away with this objection in a great measure. Whistler never printed many of any of his lithographs, except of the very few he made for publication in books or magazines.

Of some, owing to accidents or disappointments, he printed not more than half a dozen, or even not more than two or three, so that his lithographs have all the rarity the collector could ask for, and the prices they have been bringing of late in the sale rooms shows how well the collector appreciates the fact. The editions of most of the artist lithographers today, though larger, are still small, especially when compared to the unlimited editions of the earlier men. In most cases, this is not an intentional concession to the collector. The artist who is his own printer does not care to give the time it would take to pull larger editions. For if he loves to print, he loves also to make drawings, always experimenting, always seeking new effects, always trying new arrangements. He knows also the danger to himself of too large editions, for nowadays, unfortunately, to work for the many is to lower his standard. In the great days of lithography, the days of Daumier and Gavarni, the artist gave what he wanted to the public. In the Seneffeler Club of London, the small edition is one of the conditions of membership. The collector therefore, can collect lithographs with as easy a mind as he collects etchings, sure that he is getting what everybody cannot get and, at times, what nobody save himself can.

There is another point of view besides the collector's—the artist's. The artist's reason for collecting lithographs would be that they alone of all prints are actual multiplications of his work, not translations or reproductions. As the drawing is on the stone, so it comes off on the paper. The print gives the artist's drawing just as he made it. The collector of lithographs possesses not only things that are rare, but things that are autographic, and this is of much more importance. And now lithography has again become an art for artists.

